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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 NSA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03

NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 UPW-01 IO-11

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R 271448Z AUG 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9282
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USDEL FRANCE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/26/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

SAIGON 13848 8/27/71

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13848

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: AN QUANG BUDDHIST REACTION TO ELECTORAL CRISIS

1. SUMMARY. AN QUANG APPARENTLY HAS NOT YET REACHED A CONSENSUS ON WHAT ACTION, IF ANY, TO TAKE IN THE CURRENT ELECTORAL CRISIS. BUDDHIST SOURCES PRAISE THE DECISIONS OF MINH TO WITHDRAW AND OF KY NOT TO PARTICIPATE, DECLARE LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM AND APPEAR TO BE CONSIDERING SOME GESTURE, SUCH AS A LIMITED BOYCOTT OR WITHDRAWAL OF CERTAIN CANDIDACIES, IN RESPONSE TO THE ALLEGATIONS OF IRREGULARITIES IN THE AUGUST 29 LH ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. AN QUANG HAS NOT YET ISSUED ANY DEFINITIVE PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF CHURCH POLICY ON THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SITUATION. UNOFFICIAL PRESS INTERVIEWS WITH AN QUANG BUDDHISTS INDICATE SOME CONFUSION BUT ALSO WITHOUT EXCEPTION REPORT PRAISE FOR THE DECISIONS OF KY AND MINH NOT TO PURSUE THEIR CANDIDACIES.

3. ON AUGUST 20 SECRETARY GENERAL HUYEN QUANG PRAISED MINH'S WITHDRAWAL AS "CLEARSIGHTED," AND ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS

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DE FACTO LEADER TRI QUANG STATED THAT MINH'S WITHDRAWAL "ACCORDS WITH THE WISHES OF A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE." IN A SPEECH AT THE AN QUANG PAGODA AUGUST 20 (BUDDHIST MARTYR'S DAY), THICH GIAC DUC, ACTIVIST U.S.-EDUCATED NORTHERN BONZE, CALLED UPON PRESIDENT THIEU TO RESIGN. ON AUGUST 23, AN QUANG RECTOR THIEN HOA DESCRIBED KY'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW AS "CLEARSIGHTED" AND "COURAGEOUS", WHILE VENERABLE HUYEN QUANG THE SAME DAY NOTED THAT "THERE CAN BE HOPE FOR DEMOCRATIC ELECTION ONLY IF THIEU RESIGNS BEFORE ELECTION DAY." TWO DAYS LATER HUYEN QUANG REPORTEDLY STATED THAT "THE CONSTITUTION AS WELL AS THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY ARE OFTEN DISTORTED, DEFORMED, AND MADE ELASTIC BY DIVISIVE POLITICAL POWERS." HE ADDED THAT "THE PEOPLE HAVE LOST FAITH IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT" AND URGED THAT "THE ELECTIONS BE CANCELLED" BECAUSE THEY HAVE "LOST THEIR MEANING."

4. SEVERAL AN QUANG BONZES WITH WHOM WE HAVE HAD CONTACT IN PAST FEW DAYS WERE STRONGLY CRITICAL OF THE PROSPECT OF AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION, DENOUNCED THIEU, BUT APPEARED TO HAVE REACHED NO CONSENSUS ON ANY FUTURE COURSE OF BUDDHIST ACTION. [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 25 THAT "KY'S PROPOSAL IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT CRISIS." [redacted] ALSO SAID "IF THE CRISIS IS NOT RESOLVED THERE DEFINITELY WILL BE SERIOUS DISORDERS IF NOT ACTUALLY A COUP D'ETAT." IN CONVERSATION THE SAME DAY WITH EMBOFF VENERABLE [redacted] GENERALLY MODERATE [redacted] ASSERTED THAT "ONLY THE AMERICAN POSITION RESTRAINS THE PEOPLE FROM PULLING DOWN THE THIEU REGIME" WHICH HE LIKENED TO A STRUCTURE VERGING ON COLLAPSE. [redacted] STATED THAT THE PEOPLE HAVE "LOST ALL HOPE" BUT INDICATED THAT IN THE FACE OF AMERICAN INACTIVITY THEY PROBABLY WOULD RESIGN THEMSELVES TO GOING ALONG WITH THIEU, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. IN CONTRAST TO [redacted] APPARENTLY DID NOT FAVOR TEMPORARY POWERS FOR SENATE CHAIRMAN HUYEN BUT URGED VAGUELY THAT A SPECIAL ELECTORAL COMMITTEE BE ESTABLISHED TO ADMINISTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THICH [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF AKGRRXKY THAT HE APPROVED OF KY'S AUGUST 23 PROPOSAL AND STATED THAT SERIOUS DISORDERS, INCLUDING BUDDHIST STRUGGLES, WOULD BE INEVITABLE IF THIEU PERSISTED IN AN UNCONTESTED ELECTIO XPPBZTHER SENIOR AN QUANG BONZES EITHER DEPARTED FOR PROVINCES OR ARE AVOIDING EMBASSY CONTACT.

5. SOURCES IN VICE PRESIDENT KY'S CAMP PREDICTABLY CLAIM THAT AN

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QUANG SUPPORTS KY'S PROPOSAL OF AUGUST 23, AND THAT MONKS, PARTICULARLY IN CENTRAL VIETNAM, SUPPORT KY'S CANDIDACY.

TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 26 IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS THAT AN QUANG REPRESENTATIVES MET WITH KY AUGUST 22, ADVISED HIM TO WITHDRAW, AND INDICATED APPROVAL OF KY'S PROPOSAL ON SIMULTANEOUS RESIGNATIONS.

6. THERE APPEARED TO BE A GROWING INTEREST IN AN QUANG IN THE POSSIBILITY SOMEHOW OF PROTESTING ALLEGED ADMINISTRATIVE UNFAIRNESS IN THE AUGUST 29 LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS, BUT AS YET NO FIRM DECISION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN REACHED. TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 16 THAT WHILE THE CHURCH HAS LITTLE HOPE FOR AN HONEST LH ELECTION, IT NEVERTHELESS IS SUPPORTING ABOUT 100 CANDIDATES, EXPECTS 25 TO WIN OFFICE.

TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 20 THAT THE CHURCH PLANNED A BOYCOTT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BUT HAD NOT YET ADVISED ITS CANDIDATES TO WITHDRAW FROM THE LH ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, AUGUST 26

EXPRESSED GREATER CONCERN OVER ALLEGED LH ELECTION IRREGULARITIES IN PROVINCES AND STATED THAT IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW AN QUANG SHOULD CONSIDER A BOYCOTT OF THE AUGUST 29 VOTING.
BUNKER

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